



Why Outreach Is Necessary



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CHILDREN OF homeless families are entitled to receive a free and appropriate public education in the United States. The U.S. Department of Education has indicated that homeless children and youths are to receive instruction in a mainstream school environment and that local educational agencies (LEAs) are to ensure that the needs of homeless students are met in the public school setting.

Education Code Section 48200 requires persons six to eighteen years of age to attend school. Schools require proof of residency for enrollment; however, students who lack traditional residency information are not to be excluded from school. This manual provides strategies for school personnel to satisfy the various requirements for enrollment. Appendix A contains a memorandum from the California Department of Education that provides clarification about the enrollment of children living in homeless situations.

Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act

SEVERAL LAWS provide for education of the children of homeless families. In particular, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (Public Law 100-77, Subtitle VIIB, Education for Homeless Children and Youth, Section 721) sets forth the following policy:

1. Each state educational agency shall ensure that homeless children have access to the same free, appropriate public education provided to other children and youths.
2. States shall review and revise laws, practices, regulations, and policies, such as compulsory residency requirements, that act as barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youths in school.
3. Homelessness alone should not be a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.
4. Homeless children and youths should have access to education and other services that are needed to ensure they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging performance standards as other students.

APPENDIX B contains guidance on the responsibilities LEAs have to homeless children under the McKinney Act. The term “homeless children” is

defined in California *Education Code* Section 1981.2 to mean either of the following:

- (a) A school-aged child who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
- (b) A school-aged child who has a primary nighttime residence that is any of the following:
 - (1) A supervised privately operated or public shelter designed to provide temporary living accommodations
 - (2) An institution that provides a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized
 - (3) A temporary, makeshift arrangement in the accommodations of other persons
 - (4) A public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.

THIS DEFINITION may apply to families, children, and youths residing in transitional housing units or motels or shelters, camping in public places, or living “doubled up” or “tripled up” with other families, related or not. In addition, those who live in dwellings that are inadequate due to a lack of basic services, such as electricity, water, and heat, may be considered homeless. Appendix B also contains further details on living arrangements that may qualify a child to be considered homeless.

Improving America’s Schools Act, 1994

FEDERAL LAW stipulates that a local educational agency “shall reserve such funds as are necessary under this part to provide services comparable to those provided to children in schools funded under this part to serve:

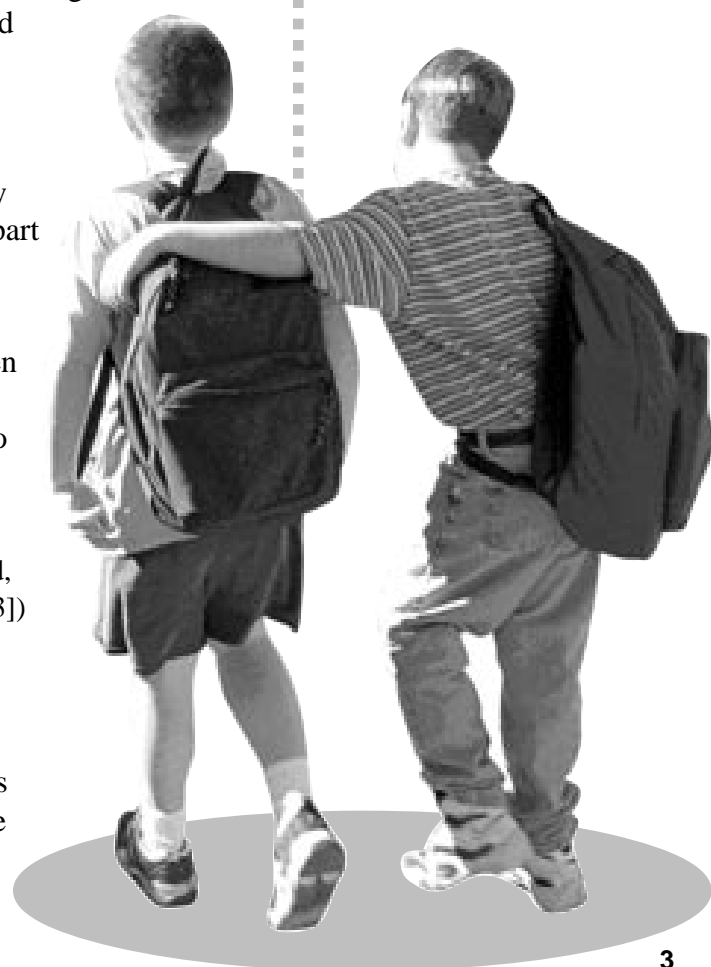
“(A) Where appropriate, eligible homeless children who do not attend participating schools, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelters.”

(Improving America’s Schools Acts, Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education of 1965, as amended, Section 1113[c][3]; 20 U.S. Code [USC] Section 6313[c][3])

IN GENERAL, homeless children and youths are eligible for Title I, Part A, services for educationally disadvantaged students; services are based on level of poverty and academic need. The Improving America’s Schools Act (IASA) stipulates that LEAs shall reserve



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such funds from their district-level Title I, Part A, allocation as are necessary to provide services to homeless children and youths who do not attend participating schools (i.e., schoolwide programs or targeted-assistance schools). This use of funds would include outreach to school-age children and youths who are not enrolled in or attending any school.

RESERVATIONS OF funds (also referred to as “set-asides”) may also be used to provide educationally related support services to children and youths in homeless shelters. Additionally, the services of a districtwide liaison for homeless students may be funded through Title I, Part A, set-asides to assist schools with the identification, enrollment, and placement of homeless students; collaborate with local social service agencies and shelter programs; and provide school staff training on the issues and special needs of homeless families and youths.

Local Improvement Plan

LOCAL IMPROVEMENT plans, as required under IASA, must include descriptions of how LEAs will coordinate and integrate services for all students, including homeless children and youths, with other services and programs to increase program effectiveness, eliminate duplication, and reduce fragmentation of the instructional program. Such coordination can help to ensure that services provided by federal programs supplement the basic educational services provided to all students by providing additional assistance to students who are most in need or are at risk of not succeeding in school.

(Improving America’s Schools Act, Title I, Part A, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended, Section 1112[b][4]; 20 USC Section 6312[b][4])

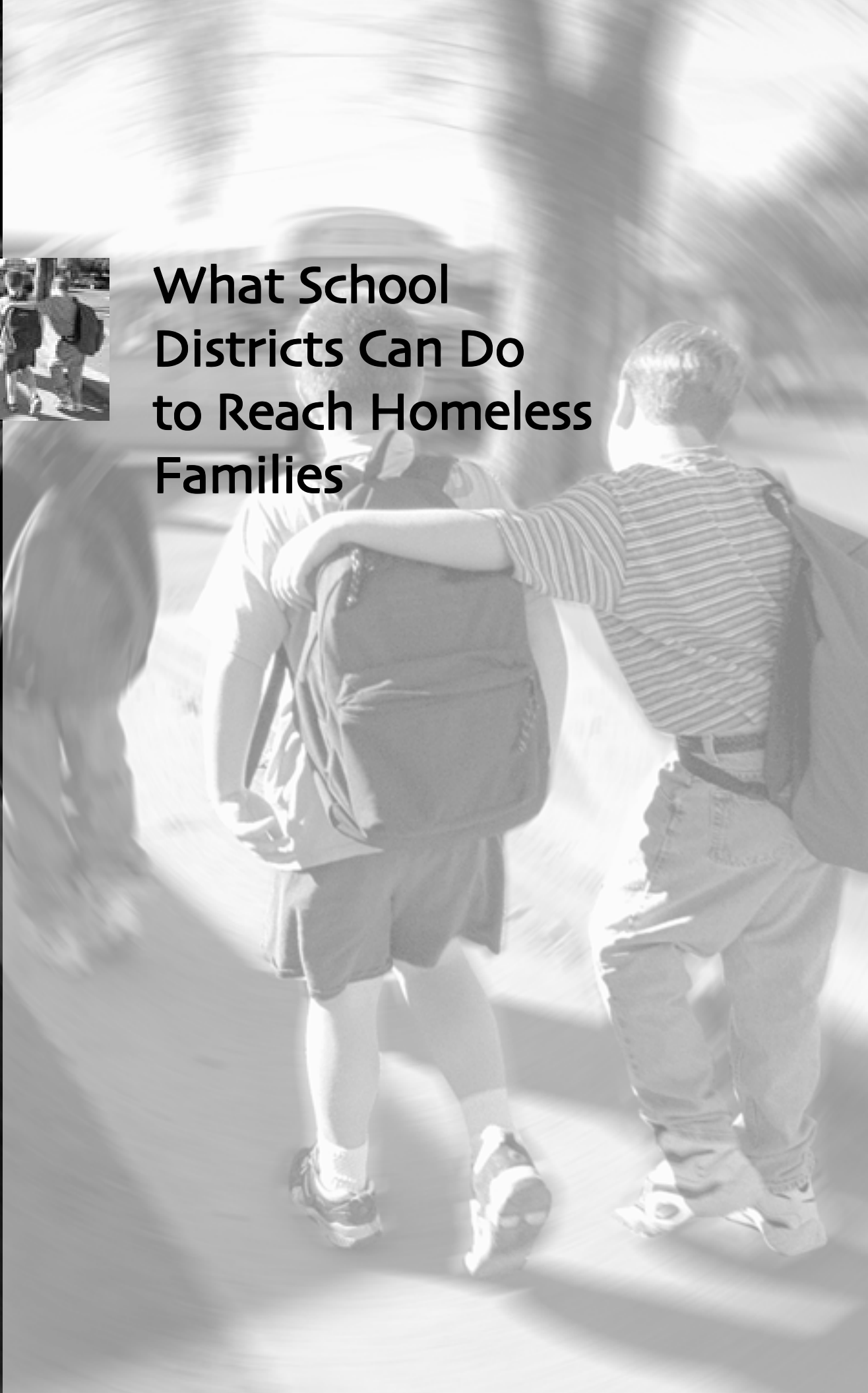
Schoolwide Program

EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 1996, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act allowed schools with 50 percent or more students in poverty to implement schoolwide programs. An eligible school, in consultation with its LEA, may coordinate federal funds and services with state and local funds it receives. The purpose of a schoolwide program is to upgrade the entire educational program to help all children. The schoolwide program approach includes the expansion and coordination of federal funds, the addition of technical assistance, and greater flexibility in implementing services to these students. Students living in homeless situations historically are an underserved population because they attend school inconsistently or may not be enrolled in school at all.

(Improving America’s Schools Act, Section 1114, 20 USC Section 6314)



What School Districts Can Do to Reach Homeless Families



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SCHOOL DISTRICTS may establish a coordinator or liaison position to implement an outreach program to homeless families with school-age children. Funding is available through Title 1, Part A, or McKinney Homeless Assistance Act grants. Schools may designate a contact person, such as a counselor, community worker, or parent advisor, to coordinate services for homeless children in school.

SCHOOL DISTRICTS and individual schools may reach out to the children of such families through the following efforts:

- Provide district staff and parents or guardians information and guidance on district policies related to enrollment, school placement, and attendance of homeless students.
- Assist in the enrollment, placement, and success of homeless children in school; and ensure access to programs and services for which these children are eligible.
- Communicate and coordinate with social service agencies, schools, and community groups that provide services to homeless families.
- Identify and eliminate barriers that prevent homeless children from enrolling in or attending school.
- Lead meetings and conduct training on sensitive issues related to the needs of homeless and other at-risk children.
- Make available to appropriate school staff, families, and community groups a list of local agencies, facilities, hotels, motels, and so forth, that provide services or shelter to homeless families.
- Make a list of persons who can help homeless families enroll their children. Keep this list handy.

Transportation

FUNDS FOR school districts to provide transportation services for children living in homeless situations may be available under Title I, Part A, reservation funds. Creative transportation methods typically consist of setting up a bus ticket or bus pass system for individual students with the

registrar or secretary of their school. Public transit systems provide a method for students to continue in their school of origin while their family moves frequently (e.g., from shelter to motel). The fiscal impact on a school of providing transportation for those students is generally small, but the impact of consistent attendance and dropout prevention may be beneficial to the district.

A SCHOOL site may decide to include resources for bus tickets in its schoolwide program plan. Families are increasingly responsible for their children's transportation to school. Those schools that have some resources for transportation may be able to help many families through brief periods of crisis. A family may need assistance for only one month. Providing assistance to families for a brief period during difficult times may mean the difference between a child becoming a school dropout or achieving success.

Front Office Guidelines

THIS SECTION provides guidance to staff so that families living in homeless situations may feel comfortable with the school enrollment process:

- Post a "Welcome" sign in the front office, welcoming families to your school. The sign may indicate the documents needed for registration and direct parents and guardians to the registrar if those documents are unavailable (see Appendix C).
- Make the family feel welcome at the school by treating them as you would other families. Treat families with respect and be careful not to stigmatize them because of their general appearance or living situation.
- Avoid using the term *homeless* whenever possible because it can cause embarrassment. Try using less stigmatizing language, such as *in transition*, *temporary residence*, or *alternative shelter/housing*.
- Be aware that parents or guardians may fear admitting they are homeless and feel frustration and stress associated with their situation. Let them know that the school and the district are prepared to work within their particular circumstances.
- Help with the paperwork; many parents may need assistance.
- Demonstrate flexibility when needed information is not readily available during enrollment or when other schools call to request information about a student. Necessary information can be exchanged over the telephone with appropriate agencies.



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In-service Training

IN-SERVICE training should be provided to district and school personnel. Training may be conducted through the following means:

- A review of federal, state, and district policies and regulations
- Publications and videos related to the homeless population and educating homeless children
- Speaker presentations by:
 - A district employee who has experience working with homeless or at-risk students and their families
 - A county office of education coordinator responsible for outreach to homeless students
 - Students or parents who have experienced homelessness
 - A representative from the department of social services or community agency serving this population
- Sensitivity training for office staff, teachers, and administrators (Schools should establish guidelines for all school personnel on the issues and needs of the homeless family and student. By understanding and addressing these issues and needs, schools can create a positive environment conducive to the enrollment and attendance of homeless students.)
- Guidelines on identifying and working with homeless students and their families